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Housekeepers' Chat

Thursday, October 10, 1929

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "The Care of the Bathroom," From Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Curtaining the Home."

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Once upon a time, a friend told me that she could always tell a good housekeeper by the condition of her bathroom.

"There may be dust on the piano," said she, "and newspapers on the living room floor, but if the bathroom is clean, I know that the housekeeper in charge has high standards."

Do you not think my friend is correct? Surely an attractive bathroom is something to be proud of-- a bathroom which is clean and shiny, well-equipped, with a towel rack for each person, an extra one for the guest, soap and toothbrush racks, and plenty of fresh clean towels.

It takes work, to keep a bathroom in order. Everything in it must be gone over frequently. The hand-basin and tub must be scoured every day, and the toilet made scrupulously clean. Very often the nickel or other metal fixtures must be wiped and polished, and the floor mopped or wiped, depending on its condition and kind. The water pipes and traps should be frequently examined, too, for stoppage or leaks, either of which should receive prompt attention from a reliable plumber.

Soiled towels and wash cloths must be replaced regularly. Soap dishes, shelves, medicine closets, and so on must be given regular attention.

Are there any questions on the subject of bathrooms?

Yes--here's a lady who wants to know what cleaner to use on bathroom fixtures. For porcelain and enameled iron fixtures, kerosene and whiting are especially good; the kerosene cuts the grease and the whiting does the scouring. Some of the commercial cleaning preparations used for enameled and porcelain fixtures are so gritty that they scratch the surface, and thus make it harder and harder to keep clean. Be very careful to select a cleaner which will not scratch the enamel. Tubs and bowls should be scrubbed with a fine scourer, or with water containing a little kerosene, rinsed with clear hot water, and wiped dry.

The stains made by water containing an excess of iron may be removed from porcelain or porcelain-lined bathtubs and bowls with a solution of oxalic acid. Oxalic acid is a poison, and must be entirely washed off. The overflow pipes should be flushed occasionally with hot water, for dirt and grease are likely to collect and decompose in the pipes.

The toilet bowl should be flushed, washed with hot soapsuds or soda solution and a long-handled brush, and flushed again. Then the seat, the cover, the chain, and the handles should be washed and wiped. All clothes and utensils used in cleaning the bathroom should be scalded and dried, preferably in the open air.

Next question: "How should tiled walls and floors be cleaned?" Tiled walls and floors are easily wiped clean with soap and warm water, unless the floor is dirty enough to need a scouring powder. It is a good plan to use two cloths, a wet and a dry one, and to clean a small area at a time, wiping it dry. Too much water may finally loosen the cement which holds the tiles. If the floor is covered with linoleum, this method of cleaning is better than mopping.

A few more questions to answer today. Here's one from a listener who says she heard my talk about kitchen window curtains the other day, but I didn't explain what is meant by "valances" and "glass" curtains.

Valances are the part of the window drapery placed across the top of the window. They are used with or without side draperies, and may be shirred, pleated, draped, or fitted. Valances are decorative, and they give a finish to the window, by carrying the eyes across the top. Many parallel lines, formed by side draperies, may give a stiff, uncomfortable effect, especially in a small room. When the side draperies are connected with a valance, the continuous vertical effect is broken.

Glass curtains are the curtains placed over all or part of the glass of the windows. They are usually made of a thin, semi-transparent fabric--net, marquisette, scrim, voile, theatrical gauze, or silk gauze-- and extend only to the window sill. Most people like to have glass curtains at all windows, except small paned casement windows, or those opening out on a beautiful landscape. Curtains diffuse the light entering the room, modify its color, protect the side draperies, and lend an air of privacy.

Have I mentioned the curtain bulletin? It describes curtains for every room in the house, and will be of great help to the amateur interior decorator. This bulletin is not free--you may get it by sending 10 cents to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

One more question to answer today: "Please tell me how to get rid of crickets. I know they are supposed to bring good luck, but so far they have brought me only clothing full of holes. Is there any way to exterminate these pests?"

I can give you a bait which will get rid of them. The chirp of the cricket is supposed to be cheerful, but when there are dozens of these cheerful insects jumping around the house, their song is quite annoying. With the approach of cool weather, the crickets seek shelter in houses, and sometimes come in by the hundreds. Hungry crickets will eat clothes, or anything else that is handy. They frequently breed in large numbers in garbage dumps and rubbish piles. These places must be cleaned up or treated with oil, before any permanent relief can be obtained.

When crickets are too numerous in a house, they can be eradicated by the use of the following bait:

"Dissolve one tablet of bichloride of mercury in one-half cup of water. Add one-half cupful of flour and stir well into a paste. Cut into small pieces the skin of a banana and mix into the paste. Spread small quantities on cardboard, and place about the rooms infected."

This bait is greedily eaten by the crickets, and soon causes their death. Needless to say--this bait must never be left where children or pets can get it.

No more questions today. Tomorrow, please be ready to copy two recipes, and a Sunday menu.

Friday: "Lamb As You Like It."

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